RESILIENT FOOD SYSTEMS INFRASTRUCTURE (RFSI) PROGRAM
Request for Grant Application

RFSI - Infrastructure Grant

Executive Summary

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS), is entering into a cooperative agreement with the Texas Department of Agriculture (TDA) to work in partnership to make competitive subawards in the form of grants to eligible entities to support infrastructure and equipment needs along the middle of the food supply chain across the state.

TDA will accept applications for the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Program, Texas RFSI State Plan under the USDA-AMS, for projects that support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Dates

Applications must be received by Thursday, February 15, 2024, by 11:59 pm Central Time (CT).

Agency Division

Trade and Business Development – Grants Office, Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov

Federal Assistance Listing Number

10.190

Key Elements

Required Action	Timing to Obtain/Submit
Create a TDA-GO Profile *(see TDA-GO! Access Instructions)*	
• Obtain Your Organization's UEI Number and establish an Active SAM.gov Account (if you do not already have one)	up to 2 weeks
• Obtain a TIN/EIN (if you do not already have one) *	up to 2 weeks
• Request Access to TDA-GO by creating a TDA-GO! profile (if you do not already have one)*	At least 48-72 hours ahead of the application submission deadline for TDA to approve account.
TDA Deadline to receive final application and all supporting materials through TDA-GO!	February 15, 2024 – 11:59 p.m. Central Time

* Text hyperlinks will direct you to applicable websites

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Please read all materials before preparing and submitting the application. Failure to follow the instructions and requirements described in this Request for Grant Application (RFGA) may result in the disqualification of the application.

Statement of Purpose

Section 1001(b)(4) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021 (Pub. L. 117—2), as amended, authorizes USDA to make grants and agreements to maintain and improve food and agricultural supply chain resiliency.

The purpose of the RFSI Program is to build resilience across the middle of the state's food supply chain for food crops. For this program, " middle-of-the-food-supply-chain " refers to activities and operations that occur in between post-harvesting of food crops and before food goods are being sold at a store or market, excluding the marketing of food products or services.

The RFSI Program will offer two grant types, "Equipment-Only" and "Infrastructure" grants, to eligible entities to support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

The RFSI Program is intended to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for locally or regionally produced food in Texas; as well as create more economic opportunities and resiliency for communities, especially in rural and/or USDA designated food deserts (also known as food access shortage areas), allowing them to retain more of the value chain dollar.

The RFSI Program also aims to:

- Support development of value-added products available to consumers;
- Support proposals that provide fair prices, fair wages and new and safe job opportunities that keep profits in rural communities; and
- Increase diversity in processing options in terms of business model approaches, geography, and availability to underserved communities.

TDA is authorized by Texas Agriculture Code, Section 12.002 to encourage the proper development and promotion of agriculture, horticulture, and other industries that grow, process, or produce products in this state, as provided by law.

In accordance with applicable law, and for RFSI Program funding consideration, TDA has previously prepared and submitted, for approval by the U.S. Secretary of Agriculture, a State Plan to carry out the purposes of the RFSI Program.

Request for Grant Application (RFGA)

TDA is accepting grant applications to consider for the Texas RFSI State Plan to USDA-AMS for projects that will support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing,

storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

TDA, at the direction of the USDA, will prioritize grant applications that benefit the following:

- Historically underserved farmers and ranchers (as defined by USDA); or
- Processors and other middle-of-the-food-supply-chain small businesses that qualify under U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) defined categories and meet the SBA size standard for federal contracting.

See page 27 for additional information.

Projected Timeline of Events

• Application Availability	December 2023
• Application Deadline	February 15, 2024
• Competitive Review of Eligible Applications	March 2024
• Preliminary Selection of projects to be included in State Plan	Mid-March 2024
• Selected Projects submitted to USDA	Mid-March 2024
• USDA review of projects and final selection by USDA	April 2024
• Final Award Announcements	Late April 2024
• Application Scores and Comments released	April/May 2024
• Start Date of Awarded Projects	May 1, 2024
• End Date of Awarded Projects	April 30, 2027

Applicant Eligibility

Applications will be accepted from the following individuals, organizations, and/or institutions:

- Agricultural producers or processors or groups of producers/processors;
- Nonprofit organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities;
- For-profit, small business, organizations operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities **that meet the Small Business Administration (SBA) size standard for federal contracting;**
- Local government & tribal government entities operating middle-of-the-supply-chain activities; and
- Institutions such as schools, universities, or hospitals bringing producers together to establish cooperative or shared infrastructure or invest in equipment that will benefit multiple producers.

Other eligibility requirements:
- Must be registered in the federal System for Award Management (SAM.gov) database, provide a UEI number. To receive a UEI number, visit the following website:

https://sam.gov
- Must have a TIN/EIN (Employer Identification Number) or if sole proprietor, a social security number.
- Qualifying applicant entities must:
    - Be organized or incorporated in the U.S. if applicable;
    - Operate in the State of Texas;
    - Be domestically owned;
    - Locate applicants' facilities physically within the 50 States of the United States, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam, American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, the Republic of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Only one application may be submitted per applying entity. An eligible entity may only apply for one grant type under the RFSI Program and cannot apply for both. Applicants must choose to either apply to the RFSI – Infrastructure Grant Program *or* RFSI – Equipment Only Grant Program.

Please note:

Individuals, organizations, and/or institutions that are considered NOT historically underserved **ARE ELIGIBLE** to apply and potentially receive RFSI grant funding.

Project proposals that benefit individuals, organizations, and/or institutions that are considered NOT historically underserved **ARE ELIGIBLE** projects that could potentially receive RFSI grant funding.

For-profit, small business, and organizations that are NOT considered either a "Small Disadvantaged Business," "Women-Owned Small Business," or a "Veteran-Owned Small Business" **ARE ELIGIBLE** to apply and potentially receive RFSI grant funding as long as they **meet the SBA size standard for federal contracting**.

Project Eligibility

Applications will be accepted from eligible applicants whose proposed projects align with the goals of the RFSI Program as directed by the USDA and the State Plan, as follows:

- Projects that support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products, including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry;

- Projects that seek to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for locally or regionally produced food in Texas; as well as create more economic opportunities and resiliency for communities, especially distressed/underserved communities;

- Projects that provide fair prices, fair wages and new and safe job opportunities that keep profits in rural communities allowing farmers, ranchers, and/or small food businesses along the middle-of-the-food-supply-chain in these areas to retain more of the value chain dollar; and

- Projects that support the development of value-added products available to consumers, especially in distressed/underserved communities.

Project Ineligibility

Grant applications with project proposals that include the following products are ineligible for funding:

- Meat and poultry,
- Wild-caught seafood,
- Exclusively animal feed and forage products,
- Fiber,
- Landscaping products,
- Tobacco,
- Dietary supplements, and
- Plants that are federally controlled illegal drug plants (e.g. cannabis).

Grant applications with project proposals that include the following activities are ineligible for funding:

- Marketing food products and/or services;
- Conducting activities related to research and development;
- Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein;
- Claim expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding; and
- Projects that will or that have already received funding from another federal grant or subaward program(s) may not receive funding *for the same activities* through an RFSI grant, provided, however, that an RFSI grant may build on the successes of prior federal grant funding.

For a more comprehensive list of ineligible items and/or activities, please see RFGA Section, "*Budget Development Information*," sub-section, "*G.   Ineligible Expenses*."

RFSI Grant Types

The RFSI program will offer two grant types, "Equipment-Only" and "Infrastructure" grants, to eligible entities.

An eligible entity may only apply for one grant type and **cannot apply for both**. Applicants must choose one grant type over the other.

Please note:

Given the competitive nature of the RFSI Program, eligible entities that apply for both grant types and do not voluntarily void any one submission by the application deadline of February 15, 2024 at 11:59pm, will subsequently result in the disqualification of both submitted applications.

Infrastructure Grants (this RFGA):

This grant type is available to eligible entities and allows for the purchasing of equipment, costs associated with training on how to use the purchased equipment, training expenses for employee safety, training expenses for food safety, construction expenses for new infrastructure, alterations and/or renovations expenses of existing infrastructure, as well as personnel salaries during the duration of the project implementation period.

Funding minimum: $100,000.00
Funding maximum: $3,000,000.00

Match requirement: **Yes, 50% of the total project cost** (including cash and/or in-kind contributions)
Match verification letters required: **Yes**
Eligibility for reduced match requirement: **Yes, 25% of the total project cost** (including cash and/or in-kind contributions) will be required for the following eligible entities that qualify as:

- Historically underserved farmers and ranchers (per USDA definitions);
- Processors and other middle-of-the-food-supply-chain small businesses that qualify under SBA defined categories and meet the SBA size standard for federal contracting.

Project Implementation Period: **3-years to complete project**
Possibility of Project/Grant Contract Extension under extenuating circumstances: **No.**

Please note: Infrastructure grants will have no option for an extension to their project/grant agreement, and therefore, scoring criteria will account for the ability of the proposed project to finalize and conclude within a three-year time frame.

The match requirement for Infrastructure grants can come in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions. There is no minimum or maximum threshold for the percentage of in-kind to cash match to satisfy the match requirement for the RFSI Program.

Funding Areas and Priorities

The RFSI Program will focus on funding Equipment-Only and Infrastructure Grants with activities that:

- Expand capacity for processing, aggregation and distribution of agricultural products to create more and better markets for producers;
- Support development of value-added products available to consumers;
- Modernize manufacturing, tracking, storage, and information technology systems;
- Enhance worker safety through adoption of new technologies or investment in equipment or facility improvements;
- Improve the capacity of entities to comply with federal, state, and local food safety requirements;
- Improve operations through training opportunities, including training on the use of all equipment purchased under the grant;
- Support the purchase and installation of specialized equipment, such as processing components, sorting equipment, packing and labeling equipment, or delivery vehicles;
- Modernize or expand an existing facility (including expansion and modifications to existing buildings and/or construction of new buildings at existing facilities);
- Support construction of a new facility for middle-of-the-supply-chain activities;
- Support construction of wastewater management structures, etc.;
- Modernize processing and manufacturing equipment through upgrades, repairs, or retooling;
- Develop, customize, or install equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals; and
- Increase storage space, including cold storage.

Applications should exhibit project proposals with equipment purchases and/or activities that fall within one or more of the following focus areas:

A. Aggregation

TDA will consider projects that support the expanded capacity for the aggregation of local and regional food products eligible under the RFSI program.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- Construction of a new facility or renovation of a facility to expand the holding capacity for the aggregation of food products;
- The purchase of specialized equipment, such as a forklift, to increase the efficiency of food aggregation operations; and
- The implementation of information technology systems to track, store, and or label local and regional food product aggregation.

Aggregation project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for farmers, ranchers, and /or food businesses as well as their locally or regionally produced food in Texas.

B. Processing

TDA will consider projects that support the expanded capacity for the processing of local and regional food products eligible under the RFSI program. (meat and poultry processing is not eligible under the RFSI program)

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- The purchasing of equipment to increase the capacity and/or efficiency for the processing of local and regional foods allowed under the RFSI Program, such as, conveyors, sorting equipment, and processing components;
- Construction of a new facility or renovation of a facility to expand the footprint of food processing operations, either to house processing equipment or other equipment along the food processing chain, such as washing equipment and/or facilities; and
- The implementation of wastewater management structures and/or improvements.

Processing project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for farmers, ranchers, and /or food businesses as well as their locally or regionally produced food in Texas.

C. Manufacturing

TDA will consider projects that support the expanded capacity for the manufacturing of local and regional food products eligible under the RFSI Program.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- The purchasing of equipment for packing and labeling marketable food products including value-added food products;
- The purchase of equipment to support the value-added production of food products, such as dehydrators, canners, and honey extractors;
- Construction of a new facility or renovation of a facility to start up or expand manufacturing operations including the development of new value-added product lines; and
- Providing support for development of value-added processing facilities.

Manufacturing project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for farmers, ranchers, and /or food businesses as well as their locally or regionally produced food in Texas.

D. Storing

TDA will consider projects that support the expanded capacity for the storing of local and regional food products eligible under the RFSI Program.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- The implementation of on-site farm, ranch, or food business cold storage facilities;
- Construction of a new facility or renovation of a facility to expand the holding capacity for the aggregation and/or storing of food products for wholesaling and/or direct marketing; and
- Construction or renovation of grain/food storage bins or silos. If storing grains, the grain must be for human consumption. Animal feed/silage is ineligible.

Storing project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for farmers, ranchers, and/or food businesses as well as their locally or regionally produced food in Texas.

E. Transporting/Distribution

TDA will consider projects that support the expanded capacity for the transportation and distribution of local and regional food products eligible under the RFSI Program.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- The purchase of specialized equipment such as delivery vehicles, including refrigerated vehicles, to either get food products to aggregation or processing facilities, as well as to markets for consumer purchase; and
- Construction of a new facility or renovation of a facility to maximize efficiency in on-loading and off-loading of local and regional food products for transportation and/or distribution to markets for consumer purchase.

Transportation/Distribution project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact to improve upon, provide new, and/or create more diverse, local, and regional market options for farmers, ranchers, and /or food businesses as well as their locally or regionally produced food in Texas.

F. Food Safety

TDA will consider projects that support food safety along the middle of the food supply chain for the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:

- Entities training employees throughout the middle of the food supply chain in developing "Good Handling Practices," or "Good Manufacturing Practices;" as directed by USDA;
- Modernizing and/or updating either equipment and/or facilities infrastructure to comply with food safety requirements as outlined by the Food Safety Modernization Act and/or the Produce Safety Rule outlined by the Food and Drug Administration; and
- Entities allowing their employees to obtain certifications in the area of food safety.

Food safety project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact of developing food safety measures along the middle of the food supply chain.

F. Employee/Worker Safety

TDA will consider projects that support employee/worker safety along the middle of the food supply chain for the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

This includes providing fair prices, fair wages, and/or new and safe job opportunities that keep profits in rural communities.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- Entities training employees on the proper and safe use of processing and manufacturing equipment, as well as specialized equipment such as forklifts and delivery vehicles;
- Modernizing and/or updating either equipment and/or facilities infrastructure that ensure worker safety while employees perform job duties;
- Develop, customize, or install equipment that improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals; and
- Entities allowing their employees to obtain certifications in the area of worker safety.

Employee/worker safety project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact of developing worker safety measures along the middle of the food supply chain.

G. Environmental Stewardship

TDA will consider projects that implement measures to support environmental stewardship along the middle of the food supply chain for the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

Project examples include, but are not limited to:
- Develop, customize, or install equipment that reduces greenhouse gas; emissions, increases efficiency in water use, improves air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals; and
- Support construction of wastewater management structures and/or systems that will improve/ reduce environmental impact.

Environmental Stewardship project proposals should demonstrate the potential impact in improving upon and/or reducing environmental impact. Applicable projects should also demonstrate how the proposed project meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.

Funding Parameters, Award Information, and Notification

- State, local, or Indian tribal governments, non-profit organizations, colleges, and universities will be subject to 2 CFR Part 200, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

- Applicants may be awarded funding at varying levels depending on the nature of the project.

- Applications must demonstrate strong justification for the requested budget, as well as the potential for providing significant demonstrable benefits to Texas' middle of the food supply chain.

- Where more than one (1) application on an eligible topic is acceptable for funding, TDA may request cooperation between applicants or revision/adjustment to an application in order to avoid duplication and to realize the maximum benefit to the state.

- TDA reserves the right to accept or reject any or all applications submitted. TDA is under no legal or other obligation to execute a grant agreement on the basis of a response submitted to this RFGA. TDA shall not pay for any costs incurred by any entity in responding to this RFGA.

- Written notifications on award decisions will be made to all applicants and their affiliated agencies, organizations, or institutions. Favorable decisions will indicate the amount of award, duration of the grant, and any special conditions associated with the project.

Term of Funding or Duration of Projects

TDA anticipates that a Conditional Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) will be made in March 2024, or as soon thereafter as practical. Final Award notice will be given upon approval from USDA. All approved grant projects for the "Infrastructure" grant type will have an anticipated grant term from May 1, 2024 through April 30, 2027.

Application Requirements

Applications must be submitted in TDA's online Grant Application/ Management system called TDA-GO no later than **11:59 p.m. CST on Thursday, February 15, 2024.**

The grant application **must** be completed online at https://tda-go.intelligrants.com/.
Mailed, faxed, emailed, or hand-delivered applications will not be accepted.

Grant Application Structure – Includes the following screens. See Section **Application Form Guidance** for detailed instructions on each section.

a. **Applicant Contact Information**
b. **Administrative Upload Forms**– Must upload the completed following documents:
   i) Application for Texas Identification Number Form
   ii) Direct Deposit Authorization Form
   iii) W-9 IRS Federal Tax Form
   iv) Supplemental Uploads include:
       (1) Infrastructure Project Profile
       (2) Supplemental Project Questionnaire
       (3) Evidence of Critical Resources & Infrastructure Letter (If applicable)
       (4) Letters of Support/Commitment
       (5) Match Verification Letters
       (6) Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) (If applicable)
       (7) Additional supporting documentation (e.g. publications, supporting data, reference list, etc.) may be included as supplemental attachments.
c. **Work Plan**
d. **Budget Narrative/Justification**
e. **Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire**
   i. Copy or hyperlink to applicant's written accounting policies and procedures.
   ii. Copy or hyperlink to applicant's written internal controls for Federal awards.
   iii. Copy or hyperlink to applicant's most recent financial audit conducted. See below for options.
       • Single Audit, if applicable
           ▪ All non-federal entities that expend $750,000 or more of federal awards in a year are required to obtain an annual audit in accordance with 2 CFR Part 200-Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles and Audit Requirements for federal Awards. Additional information can be found on the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Policy Statements web page;
           ▪ The Single Audit also must be submitted to any pass-through entity, if applicable; and

- Copies of the audit report must be made available to the public, which can be accomplished by posting a link to the report from the entity's website;
- Audited Financial Statements; or
- IRS Form 990.

Risk Assessment & Monitoring

In accordance with 2 CFR §200.331(b), TDA will evaluate each awarded applicant's risk of noncompliance with Federal statutes, regulations, and terms and conditions of the grant award for the purposes of determining the appropriate monitoring.

To evaluate this risk and determine the appropriate level of monitoring, the applicant must complete and submit the Accounting System & Financial Capability Questionnaire as part of the grant application package by the deadline stated in this RFGA. Responses from this questionnaire will be inserted into a program risk assessment tool.

The risk assessment is based on a score from 1 to 100 points and takes into consideration the following information:

- Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire;
- Recent history of performance with TDA grant programs (any open grants and grants closed within the last five years);
- Alignment of the pending application with the statutory authority of the grant program, as well as program regulations and policies; and
- Audits, reviews, and/or reported findings, if applicable.

Evaluation and Selection Information

The entire grant application package will be evaluated on its comprehensiveness, completeness, and overall quality. An administrative review will be conducted by TDA to determine whether the applicant was adequately responsive to the requirements of this RFGA. TDA will take into consideration the status of any open project's progress from any other grant program administered by TDA, timely expenditure of funding on previous projects/utilization rate, performance report compliance, and risk assessment score. For applicants that do not have previous grant awards from one or more of TDA's grant programs, TDA will ensure the prior considerations do not cause a disadvantage to the application submitted.

Based on the application requirements set forth above, a review team including internal and external experts and/or stakeholders will competitively review all applications to evaluate each project's ability to support the expanded capacity for the aggregation, processing, manufacturing, storing, transporting, wholesaling, and distribution of locally and regionally produced food products including specialty crops, dairy, grains for human consumption, aquaculture, and other food products, excluding meat and poultry.

The evaluation criteria for the "Infrastructure" grant type is as follows (100 points maximum score):

- **Applicant Designation (Up to 4 points maximum)**
  Score based upon the designation of either Historically Underserved farmer or rancher, or a small business that qualifies under SBA defined categories and meets the SBA size standard for federal contracting.

- **Project Relevance to RFSI Program Goals (Up to 10 points maximum):**
  Rate how well the applicant's proposed project meets the overall goals of the RFSI Program as designated by USDA.

- **Potential Project Impact and Justified Need: (Up to 10 points maximum):**
  Rate how well the applicant illustrates the need for RFSI funding in their business, community, or farmer group, as well as the potential impact of the proposed project. (How many farmers and/or food businesses will it help access better markets and/or provide better opportunities to strengthen the local and/or regional food system?)

- **Project Beneficiaries (for NON-Historically Underserved and NON-SBA defined businesses) (Up to 5 points maximum):**
  Score based upon the number of individuals and/or groups of individuals cited as project beneficiaries through an explanation of the project activities (who and how they will benefit).

- **Project Beneficiaries (for Historically Underserved and SBA defined businesses) (Up to 5 points maximum):**
  Score based upon the number of individuals and/or groups of individuals cited as project beneficiaries that qualify as Historically Underserved farmers/ranchers or as a small food business that meets SBA defined categories through an explanation of the project activities (who and how they will benefit).

- **Infrastructure / Equipment Locale (Up to 5 points maximum):**
  Score based upon the location where the infrastructure and/or equipment will be developed/placed within the state. Applicants must use the rural designation definition and the Distressed Communities Index to determine the location and/or impact areas of their proposed project.

- **Project Potential Impact Locale (Up to 5 points maximum):**
  Score based upon the location where the collective majority of grant project activity impact area will be developed within the state. Applicants must use the rural designation definition and the Distressed Communities Index to determine the location and/or impact areas of their proposed project.

- **Workforce Development (Up to 3 points maximum):**
  Rate how well the applicant communicates the need for, and the potential impact of, providing safe job opportunities/ hiring employees to operate in the middle of the food supply chain. Are plans included to provide current and/or new employees with training opportunities related to worker safety and food safety that results in certification and/or credentialing?

- **Environmental Stewardship (Up to 3 points maximum):**
  Rate how well the applicant communicates the development and/or installation of equipment or systems that have environmental benefits, as well as the need for, and the potential impact of such. Potential impact in this context includes but is not limited to the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions, increasing efficiency in water use, improving air and/or water quality, and/or meets one or more of USDA's climate action goals.

- **Market Opportunity (Up to 8 points maximum):**
  Rate how well the applicant's proposed project demonstrates a viable solution to retain more of the value chain dollar for their communities. Does it support competitive and profitable market access and open new or increased market opportunities?

- **Project Feasibility (Up to 10 points maximum)**
  Rate the grant proposal's ability to communicate a project work plan that is feasible within the three-year grant implementation period. No project/grant contract extensions will be given, no exceptions. It is vital that the grant project be fully completed within the three-year implementation timeframe, therefore, scoring on a project work plan will reflect such. The proposal should illustrate how the planned activities are necessary to accomplish the stated objectives.

- **Project Sustainability (Up to 10 points maximum)**
  Rate the grant proposal's ability to achieve sustainability for the project beyond the grant duration.

- **External Support (6 Points)**
  Rate the level of support this project demonstrates; are project partners and stakeholders actively involved or have they pledged their support of the project's goals? This section includes both the question under 'Project Profile' and any additional letters of support the applicant has included.

- **Outcomes / Performance Measures (8 Points)**
  Review how the applicant plans to collect and track performance measurables related to expected/stated outcomes throughout the duration of the proposed project and determine how well the applicant addresses reaching the expected/stated outcomes.

Review the selected performance measures and outcomes to determine how realistic and relevant the selections are to the proposed project.

- **Budget: (8 Points)**
  Review the Budget Narrative to determine how well the applicant demonstrates the reasonableness of the requested amount and relevance to the project's purpose, objectives, and outcomes.

- **Submission of Letters of Support (Pass or Fail)**
  TDA requires Infrastructure grant applications to include a letter of support for each stated key partnership, with a required minimum of at least one letter of support in total.

  If no key partnerships are being formed in the execution of the proposed project, the required support letter should come from the community, i.e. a farmer, rancher, small food business, or groups thereof, that the project proposal states to benefit (other than the applicant).

  If the applicant fails to provide at least one letter(s) of support, the application will be considered incomplete and ineligible for funding.

- **Submission of Matching Funds Verification Letters (Pass or Fail)**
  TDA requires Infrastructure grant applications to include one match verification letter **for EACH** cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization.

  If the applicant fails to provide a letter for any of the stated match sources in the proposal, the application will be considered incomplete and ineligible for funding.

  More information on the requirements for matching funds can be found in the RFGA Section titled, "*Budget Development Information*," sub-section, "*D. Infrastructure Grants – Match Verification Letters*."

All applications are scored by the individual evaluators. Additional points are assigned based on the Risk Assessment Score. CFR, Title 2, Part 200, which outlines grant management requirements, also further defines agency requirements of completing a risk assessment prior to award funding.

Individual evaluator's scores are added together to create a cumulative proposal score and then the risk assessment score is added to determine the application's total score.

Additionally, TDA reserves the right to select project proposals that ensure both diversity in the project types being funded as well as regional representation throughout the entire state as a measure of equitable federal award spending. An application may score well, however, limited amount of funding from USDA for the RFSI Program means that the selection of projects in these

regards, for both grant types, is also limited. Final determinations on grant award allocations are made by the USDA-AMS in cooperation with TDA.

USDA-AMS is predicted to conclude the final approval process in April of 2024. Final evaluation scores and reviewer comments will be provided at that time.

Late or Ineligible Applications

- TDA will not consider applications submitted after the published due date unless the deadline has been revised for all applicants.
- TDA will perform an administrative review to determine applicant eligibility and responsiveness to the request for grant applications.
- Applications submitted by ineligible applicants will not receive funding consideration.
- Applications that are not fully responsive to the request for grant applications will not be considered during the competitive review process.
- Determinations of late or ineligible applications are final and not subject to an appeal process.

Grant Recipient Responsibilities and Accountability

Selected applicants (Grant Recipient) will be responsible for the conduct of the grant project and for the results described in the application. Each Grant Recipient shall monitor the day-to-day performance of the grant funds to assure adherence to statutes, regulations, and grant terms and conditions. Grant Recipients must carry out the activities described in the approved scope of work.

Grant Recipients will be accountable for documenting the use of grant funds and must ensure funds are used solely for authorized purposes. Grant Recipients must ensure:

- Funds are used only for activities covered by the approved project;
- Funds are not used in violation of the restrictions and prohibitions of the grant agreement or applicable law; and
- All budget and performance reports are completed in a timely manner.

Each Grant Recipient must ensure it has an adequate accounting system in place and good internal controls to ensure expenditures and reimbursements are properly reported to TDA. Complete records relating to the grant project, including accounting records, financial records, progress reports and other documentation, must be maintained for four (4) years after the conclusion of the grant project or longer if required by TDA.

Reporting Requirements

Grant Recipients will be required to submit periodic performance reports. Reporting timelines are incorporated into the grant agreement. As part of TDA's ongoing monitoring of grant funds,

Grant Recipients must demonstrate programmatic and financial progress toward achieving project goals. Failure to comply with reporting requirements may result in withholding requests for reimbursement and/or termination of the award.

Performance Reports must be in a narrative format prescribed by TDA and detail the accomplishments of the project objectives for that period.

An Annual Performance Report is due each year of performance on the State Plan to USDA. Grant Recipients will provide an annual report in a narrative format prescribed by TDA, documenting the accomplishments of their project for that period.

The Final Performance Report is due thirty (30) days after project completion, or termination of the Grant Agreement, whichever occurs first. This report must be in a narrative format prescribed by TDA. Similar to the annual performance reports, the final performance reports will be provided to USDA documenting Texas' progress on the RFSI State Plan.

The following schedule is a sample of the reporting terms for "Infrastructure" grantees:

GRANTEE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS for "Infrastructure" grantees		
Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant Program		
Contract Term: 5/1/2024 - 4/30/2027		
	Due Date	Reporting Period
Performance Report 1	7/1/2024	5/1/2024 - 5/31/2024
Performance Report 2	10/1/2024	6/1/2024 – 8/31/2024
Performance Report 3	1/1/2025	9/1/2024 – 11/30/2024
Performance Report 4	4/1/2025	12/1/2024 – 2/28/2025
Annual Performance Report	6/1/2025	5/1/2024 - 4/30/2025
Performance Report 5	7/1/2025	3/1/2025 - 5/31/2025
Performance Report 6	10/1/2025	6/1/2025 – 8/31/2025
Performance Report 7	1/1/2025	9/1/2025 – 11/30/2025
Performance Report 8	4/1/2026	12/1/2025 – 2/28/2026
Annual Performance Report	6/1/2026	5/1/2025 - 4/30/2026
Performance Report 9	7/1/2026	3/1/2026 - 5/31/2026
Performance Report 10	10/1/2026	6/1/2026 – 8/31/2026
Performance Report 11	1/1/2027	9/1/2026 – 11/30/2026
Performance Report 12	4/1/2027	12/1/2026 – 2/28/2027
Final Performance Report	6/1/2027	5/1/2024 - 4/30/2027

Budget Development Information

A. **Payment.** _Grant funds will be paid on a cost reimbursement basis._ Grant Recipients will be required to submit payment requests at least quarterly, but no more frequently than monthly, in order to show significant financial and programmatic progress. Payment requests must include sufficient documentation that details each expense. Acceptable documentation may include, but is not limited to, invoices, receipts, or detailed information regarding personnel costs, as determined by TDA, in its sole discretion. _Payment requests shall only be submitted by Grant Recipient to TDA for reimbursement after Grant Recipient purchases the approved budget item._

B. **Payment Schedule.** In order to be eligible for reimbursement of a payment request, all reporting requirements must be current. Grant funds shall be paid according to the following schedule:

   a. Up to 90% of the total grant award may be disbursed provided the work for which payment is requested has been completed and proper documentation to substantiate the request has been submitted.
   b. The remaining 10% will only be disbursed once all reporting requirements have been met, including, but not limited to, the Equipment – Acquisition and Disposition of Property Form (if applicable) and the Final Performance Report.

C. **Advance Payment Options** – Selected projects for Infrastructure grants will receive funding on a cost reimbursement basis.

   Infrastructure grants may receive a one-time-only advance payment of grant funds subject to TDA approval and will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to accommodate for special circumstances.

   Based on the Grant Recipient's written request and justification, TDA may advance funds of this grant type in a one-time payment at the beginning of the grant term to meet its working capital needs. Otherwise, selected applicants must have the financial capacity to pay all costs up-front. Advanced payments will be limited to 10% of the grant award or $300,000, whichever is less.

D. **Infrastructure Grants – Cost Sharing and Matching Funds.** This grant requires the recipient to expend matching funds at 50% of the total project costs, unless the recipient qualifies for the reduced match option outlined in sub-section, _E. Infrastructure Grants – Reduced Match Eligibility_, below.

Demonstration of planned expenditure of funds in excess of the minimum match amount will not impact the selection process. If an applicant submits a budget that includes an amount with a match greater than their designated threshold of either 50% or 25% of the total project costs, the Grant Recipient is required to demonstrate expenditures in a proportionate amount prior to reimbursement. Expenditure of matching funds must be documented on applicant's budget and reported to TDA at the time a payment request is submitted. Any reduction of expenditure of recipient's matching funds that falls below the amount proposed in the application and identified in the grant agreement must be approved in writing by TDA and will result in a proportionate reduction in the grant award.

The match requirement for Infrastructure grants can come in the form of cash and/or in-kind contributions. There is no minimum or maximum threshold for the percentage of in-kind to cash match to satisfy the match requirement for the RFSI Program.

In-kind contributions are defined, when used as a cost share or match for a grant, as the value of goods or services provided for the benefit of the grant program, where no funds transferred hands. For example, a partner, such as a tribal community member, may volunteer their professional expertise as a match contribution to the project as described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.306(e). These contributions cannot satisfy a cost sharing or matching requirement for this grant program if they are used toward satisfying a match requirement under any other Federal grant agreement to which the applicant is a party.

All matching contributions must be committed or secured at the time an applicant is recommended for an award.

Indirect costs may count toward the Infrastructure Grant applicant's match. Refer to sub-section, *H. Indirect Cost*, below for more information on Indirect costs.

Program income, as defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.1, or any other Federal funds is an ineligible source of match or cost share.

E. **Infrastructure Grants – Match Verification Letters.** Each application must include the total amount of match and how it will specifically align with their requested funding. Additionally, applicants must submit one match verification letter **for EACH** cash or in-kind resource signed by the matching organization. A *Match Verification Letter Template* will be made available to RFSI applicants via TDA's RFSI webpage. If you choose not to use the provided template, the match verification documents must minimally include the following:

- Project Applicant
- Project Title
- Cash Commitment per year (if applicable) and Total Cash Match
- In-kind Contribution per year (if applicable) and Total In-kind Match. Break down items into categories as applicable:
  - Salaries (employee name, title, duties, pay rate/hr., amount matched per year)

- o Items/Activities (fair market value per unit, how value was determined, and amount match per year)
- o Explanation of how each type of match will correspond to the budget or be used by the applicant)
- • Signature of Matching Organization Representative with typed name and title.

Signed Match Verification Letters must accompany the Infrastructure Grant proposal at the time of application to the Texas Department of Agriculture.

F. **Infrastructure Grants – Reduced Match Eligibility.** For Historically Underserved farmers and ranchers, or for other small businesses that qualify under Small Business Administration (SBA) defined categories of Small Disadvantaged Business, Women-Owned Small Business, or Veteran-Owned Small Business, and meet the SBA size standard for federal contracting, the required match funding contribution or cost share is reduced to **25% of the project cost**.

G. **Eligible Expenses.** All RFSI funded awards are subject to the terms and conditions, cost principles, and other considerations described in the [USDA-AMS General Terms and Conditions](#).

Generally, expenses that are necessary and reasonable for proper and efficient performance and administration of the project are eligible. Grant funds may not be used to supplant normal business costs but instead must be used to cover the costs incurred for the approved proposed activities.

1. Personnel costs – both salary and benefits directly related to project implementation;
2. Contracts – agreements made with a third-party to perform a portion of the project;
3. Travel – mileage reimbursement, transportation and lodging; reimbursement for travel is limited to the federal Domestic Per Diem Rates at the time of travel;
4. Construction Costs – funds may be used for improvements, rearrangements, or alterations of an existing building or facility to use the space more effectively and to accommodate new or upgraded equipment and processes. Funds may be used for new construction of buildings or structural changes to an existing building/facility resulting in a square foot expansion or requiring changes to the building's floor, foundation, and exterior or load bearing walls.
5. Capital Expenditures – Equipment that has a useful life of more than one year and a cost of more than $5,000. CAPITAL EXPENDITURES MUST BE SUBMITTED FOR APPROVAL TO TDA PRIOR TO EXPENDITURE/PURCHASE. Failure to secure written approval from TDA will result in disallowance of the cost;
6. Supplies and direct operating expenses – items that cost less than $5,000 per unit with a useful life of less than one year, office supplies, postage, telecommunications, printing, etc. that are directly related to the project activities;
7. Controlled assets are defined as certain items valued $500.00 - $4,999.99 which must also be inventoried, [Controlled Property Listing](#);

8. Direct operating expenses (other) – any expenses that do not fall into the other categories directly related to the proposed activities; and
9. Indirect Costs –limited to (ten) 10 percent de minimis indirect rate of modified total direct costs (MTDC) unless the entity has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency. For more information on indirect costs, please refer to sub-section, *I. Indirect Costs*, below.

H. Ineligible Expenses. Certain expenses may be prohibited by state or federal law or determined to be ineligible by program guidelines. Some common ineligible expenses for this program include but are not limited to the following:
1. Alcoholic beverages;
2. Entertainment;
3. Tips/ gratuity
4. Contributions, charitable or political;
5. Expenses falling outside of the contract period;
6. Expenses for items not listed in the project budget or that fail to meet the intent of the program;
7. Expenses that are not adequately documented;
8. Food and Meal reimbursements related to travel, meetings, conferences, or other events;
9. Expenses to hold meetings, a conference, or other events;
10. Expenses for marketing of food products or services;
11. Acquiring real property (including land purchases), or any interest therein;
12. Expenses that have been or will be reimbursed under any Federal, State, or local government funding;
13. Costs that have been or will be reimbursed by a third party;
14. Costs that support or oppose union organizing;
15. Costs associated with conducting research and development;
16. Costs that only support existing processing capacity for a facility;

Project proposals that include the following products are ineligible for funding:

- Meat and poultry
- Wild-caught seafood
- Exclusively animal feed and forage products
- Fiber
- Landscaping products
- Tobacco
- Dietary supplements
- Plants that are federally controlled illegal drug plants (e.g. cannabis)

Please reference Allowable and Non-allowable Costs Contained in 2 CFR Part 200 Subpart E - Cost Principles for additional guidance.

I. **Indirect Costs** - Indirect costs (also known as "facilities and administrative costs"—defined at 2 C.F.R. § 200.1) are those costs incurred for a common or joint purpose benefitting more than one cost objective, and not readily assignable to the cost objectives specifically benefitted, without effort disproportionate to the results achieved.

As stated in the regulations (2 C.F.R. §§ 200.413 and 414), any non-Federal entity that has never received a negotiated indirect cost rate, except State and Local Government and Indian Tribe Indirect Cost Proposals, may elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent of modified total direct costs (MTDC) which may be used indefinitely. No documentation is required to justify the 10% de minimis indirect cost rate. As described in 2 C.F.R. § 200.403, costs must be consistently charged as either indirect or direct costs, but may not be double charged or inconsistently charged as both.

All entities who elect to charge a de minimis rate of 10 percent must use the MTDC as the base. MTDC are defined in 2 C.F.R. § 200.1 as all direct salaries and wages, applicable fringe benefits, materials and supplies, services, travel, and up to the first $25,000 of each sub-contractor. MTDCs exclude equipment, capital expenditures, charges for patient care, rental costs, tuition remission, scholarships and fellowships, participant support costs, and the portion of each sub-contractor in excess of $25,000. Other items may be excluded only when necessary to avoid a serious inequity in the distribution of indirect costs, and with the approval of the cognizant agency for indirect costs.

If an entity has a negotiated indirect cost rate approved by its cognizant agency, the applicant must include a copy of the approved NICRA. Entities that would like to negotiate an indirect cost rate must contact their cognizant agency. For assignments of cognizant agencies see 2 C.F.R. § 200.1.

General Information

Grant Awards.

- The announcement of preliminary grant awards will be made by the date outlined in this RFGA or as soon thereafter as practical. Selected applicants will receive a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) letter and a grant agreement from TDA. The NOGA is not legally binding until the grant agreement is fully executed.
- All grant awards are subject to the availability of appropriations and available funding, as well as necessary authorizations by the Texas Legislature.
- TDA reserves the right to fund multiple projects partially or fully. TDA reserves the right to negotiate individual elements of any application and to reject any and all applications. Where more than one application is awarded and is acceptable for funding, TDA may request cooperation between Grant Recipients or revisions/adjustments to an application in order to avoid duplication and to realize the maximum benefit to the state.

Applications.

- TDA reserves the discretion and right to reject all applications and is not liable for costs incurred by the applicant in the development, submission, or review of the application; all costs incurred by the applicant prior to the effective date of a grant award agreement, if any, shall be the sole responsibility of the applicant.
- TDA reserves the right to alter, amend, or clarify any provisions, terms, or conditions of this program or any grant awarded as a result thereof, or to terminate this program at any time prior to the execution of an agreement, if TDA deems any such action to be in the best interest of TDA and of the State of Texas. The decision of TDA will be administratively final in this regard.

Public Information
- In the event that a public information request for an application is received, TDA shall process such request in accordance with Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code. Applicants are advised to consult with their legal counsel regarding disclosure issues and to take appropriate precautions to safeguard trade secrets or any other proprietary information.

- All applications submitted under this program are subject to release as public information, unless the application or specific parts of any such application can be shown to be exempt from disclosure under the Texas Public Information Act, Chapter 552 of the Texas Government Code.

Additional Information
- Assistance is available in English and Spanish. Please call (512) 463-7448 to request assistance.

- In accordance with federal civil rights laws and USDA civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA.

- Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.), should contact TDA where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact TDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339 or Texas Relay 7-1-1. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

- To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992.

Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: 1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights 1400 Independence Avenue, SW Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; 2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or 3) email: program.intake@usda.gov. USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

Reporting Fraud in State Government
- TDA is committed to promoting a culture of integrity within the agency. As part of the agency's commitment, TDA has instituted a Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Prevention Program to provide its employees with the necessary guidance and support to prevent, detect, and eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within the agency. TDA's Fraud, Waste, and Abuse Prevention Program complies with Executive Order RP-36 of July 12, 2004.

- Reports of suspected fraud or illegal activities involving state resources may be made by:
  - contacting the Texas State Auditor's Office (SAO) Hotline by calling (800) TX-AUDIT (892-8348);
  - visiting the SAO website at (https://sao.fraud.texas.gov/ReportFraud/);
  - contacting TDA by calling the TDA Fraud Prevention Hotline at (512) 475-3423 or (866) 5-FRAUD-4 (866) 537-2834; or
  - sending a written complaint to:
    - ➢ by mail: Texas Department of Agriculture
      1700 N. Congress Avenue
      Austin, TX 78701
    - ➢ by email: fraud@texasagriculture.gov.

General Compliance Information

1. Grant Recipient (an applicant who receives a grant under this program) must comply with TDA's reporting requirements and financial procedures outlined in the grant agreement. Any delegation by a Grant Recipient to a subcontractor regarding any duties and responsibilities imposed by the grant award must be approved in advance by TDA and shall not relieve the Grant Recipient of his/her responsibilities to TDA for performance of those duties.
2. Grant Recipient must remain in full compliance with state and federal laws and regulations. Non-compliance may result in termination of the grant or ineligibility for reimbursement of expenses.
3. Grant Recipient must keep separate records and a bookkeeping account (with a complete record of all expenditures) for a project. Records shall be maintained for a minimum of four (4) years after the completion of the project, or as otherwise agreed upon with TDA. If any litigation, claim, negotiation, audit or other action is initiated prior to the expiration of the four-year retention period, then all records and accounts must be retained until their destruction is authorized in writing by TDA. TDA and SAO reserve the right to

examine all books, documents, records, and accounts relating to the project, including all electronic records, at any time throughout the duration of the agreement until all litigation, claims, negotiations, audits or other action pertaining to a grant is resolved, or until the expiration of the four-year retention period or a final judgment in litigation, whichever is longer. TDA and SAO shall have access to: all electronic data or records pertaining to the grant project; paper or other tangible documents or records, including the physical location where records are stored; and all locations related to project activities.

4. If Grant Recipient has a financial audit performed during the time Grant Recipient is receiving funds from TDA, upon request, TDA shall have access to information about the audit, including the audit transmittal letter, management letter, any schedules, and the final report or result of such audit.

5. Grant Recipients must comply with Texas Government Code, Chapter 783 (Uniform Grant and Contract Management Act) and the Texas Grant Management Standards (TxGMS), along with USDA-AMS General Terms and Conditions, 2 CFR Parts 200 and 400, Uniform Administrative Requirements, Cost Principles, and Audit Requirements for Federal Awards.

6. Any public infrastructure project funded under RFSI must coordinate with TDA and USDA-AMS to ensure adherence to BABA guidance. For such projects, the recipient must comply with the Buy America Sourcing requirements outlined in the Build America, Buy America (BABA) provisions of the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act](#).

   The BABA Act, enacted as part of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act on November 15, 2021, established a domestic content procurement preference for all Federal financial assistance obligated for infrastructure projects after May 14, 2022. The domestic content procurement preference requires that all iron, steel, manufactured products, and construction materials used in covered infrastructure projects are produced in the United States. More information found in 2 CFR Part 184 - BUY AMERICA PREFERENCES FOR INFRASTRUCTURE PROJECTS: https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-2/part-184

   For-Profit Entities: BABA is *not applicable to for-profit entities* (either prime or subrecipient) particularly for infrastructure projects. AMS will review facilities owned by public entities to determine whether BABA requirements apply, following USDA guidance to exempt *de minimis* grant awards and other inapplicable activities. All other Infrastructure Grant entities that surpass the $250,000 threshold of applicable procurement costs must adhere to BABA.

   Small Grants Waiver: The small grants waiver will apply to awards with total federal funding below the Simplified Acquisition Threshold, which is currently set at $250,000. BABA is not applicable to Equipment Only Grants as they do not surpass this threshold of $250,000.

   [Guidance on BABA requirements for USDA sub-award recipients is available here.](#)

7. Grant Recipients must comply with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and related applicable agency regulations and instructions, Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), the Endangered Species Act (ESA), other laws and regulations as outlined therein, and any applicable state, local, or tribal laws. A review for NEPA compliance is required prior to the award of grant funds. If selected for an award, applicants must provide all requested information to support compliance with NEPA, NHPA, ESA, and all other federal environmental laws and regulations.

A Citizen's Guide to NEPA (doe.gov) is a relatively short guide that provides an overview of NEPA requirements.

Other Information

Rural and Rural Area

As defined in 7 CFR 4284.1103, the term, "rural" means any area of a state not in a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants according to the latest decennial census of the United States and not in the urbanized area contiguous and adjacent to a city or town that has a population of more than 50,000 inhabitants. The terms, "rural" and "rural area" shall be determined as defined in 7 U.S.C. 1991(a)(13).

Historically Underserved Farmer or Rancher

The Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (2018 Farm Bill) includes provisions that address historically underserved farmers and ranchers. Four groups are defined by USDA as "**Historically Underserved**," including farmers or ranchers who are:

- New & Beginning,
- Socially Disadvantaged,
- Veterans, and
- Limited Resource.

To see if you meet any of these definitions/criteria, please visit USDA's historically underserved farmers and ranchers webpage.

SBA Defined Categories

Small Business Administration (SBA) defined categories include:

- Small Disadvantaged Businesses,
- Women-Owned Small Businesses, and
- Veteran-Owned Small Businesses.

Small Disadvantaged Business: A business that is small according to SBA's size standards for its business type and that is 51% or more owned and controlled by one or more disadvantaged

persons. The disadvantaged person or persons must be socially disadvantaged and economically disadvantaged. For the purposes of this designation, disadvantaged persons is defined per eCFR :: 13 CFR 124.103 -- "Who is socially disadvantaged?" as "Those who have been subjected to racial or ethnic prejudice or cultural bias within American society because of their identities as members of groups and without regard to their individual qualities. The social disadvantage must stem from circumstances beyond their control." See "Small Disadvantaged Business" (sba.gov) for more information.

Women-Owned Small Business: A small business according to SBA size standards for its business type that is at least 51% owned and controlled by women who are U.S. citizens; and have women manage day-to-day operations who also make long-term decisions. See "Women-Owned Small Business Federal Contract program" (sba.gov) for more information.

Veteran-Owned Small Business: A small business, as defined by the SBA size standard for its business type that has no less than 51% of the business owned and controlled by one or more veterans. For those veterans who are permanently and totally disabled and unable to manage the daily business operations of their business, their business may still qualify if their spouse or appointed, permanent caregiver is assisting in that management. See "Veteran contracting assistance programs" (sba.gov) for more information.

SBA's Size Standards Tool

To see if your organization meets the SBA size standard for federal contracting, please visit SBA's Size Standards webpage and use the Size Standards Tool.

Deadline for Submission of Responses & Contact Information

Applicants must submit one complete, electronically signed application through the TDA-GO system by TDA **11:59 p.m. CT on Thursday, February 15, 2024** (see submission instructions below). Applications may not be supplemented after the submission deadline. It is the applicant's responsibility to ensure the timely receipt of the application and all required materials.

For questions regarding submission of the application and/or TDA requirements, please contact TDA's Grants Office at (512) 463-6616 or by email at Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov. TDA staff is available to answer questions regarding the RFSI Program and to provide clarifying information concerning this RFGA. TDA staff will not review any grant proposals prior to the application deadline. Mailed, faxed, emailed or hand-delivered applications will not be accepted.

The online system will date and time stamp the submission for receipt documentation purposes. Click the link to access TDA-GO! or copy and paste the following in your browser: https://tda-go.intelligrants.com/.

An automated receipt email will be sent from the TDA-GO! system indicating the application has been received.

The applicant is responsible for ensuring their application is submitted in a timely manner. TDA highly recommends applicants submit their application early to allow time to resolve any issues that may arise. Late applications due to technical problems or errors will not be accepted.

Program Contacts

Grant Program and Application Support - Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM (CT)
TDA staff is available to answer questions regarding the RFSI Program and to provide clarifying information concerning this RFGA. TDA staff will not review any grant proposals prior to the application deadline.

Grant Program Support

> Ryan Horsak
> Grant Specialist
> Phone: (512) 463-6616
> Email: FoodSystems@TexasAgriculture.gov
>
> Kat Neilson
> Lead Grants Specialist
> Phone: (512) 463-6695
> Email: Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov

TDA-GO Help Desk for technical support
> Monday – Friday 8:00 AM to 5:00 PM
> 866-449-1425
> azhelpdesk@agatesoftware.com

See next page for more information.

TDA-GO! Access Instructions

Click here to access the TDA-GO! website or copy and paste the following in your browser: https://tda-go.intelligrants.com/

Step 1: Accessing Grant Opportunity

The following describes how to access the 2024 Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Grant opportunity via TDA-GO! for returning users.

- **Returning users - Log in with your current username and password**
- **New Users – See section "TDA-GO! New User Instructions" on page 46**

Dashboard

After logging in, your Dashboard will appear (Figure 1).

- **My Tasks** are documents/applications that are in process;
- **Initiate New Application** are blank grant applications.

Figure 1. Landing page after logging in

Choose the **Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure Program** by scrolling down the **Initiate New Application** box and select **RFSI - Infrastructure Grants** (Figure 2 & 3).
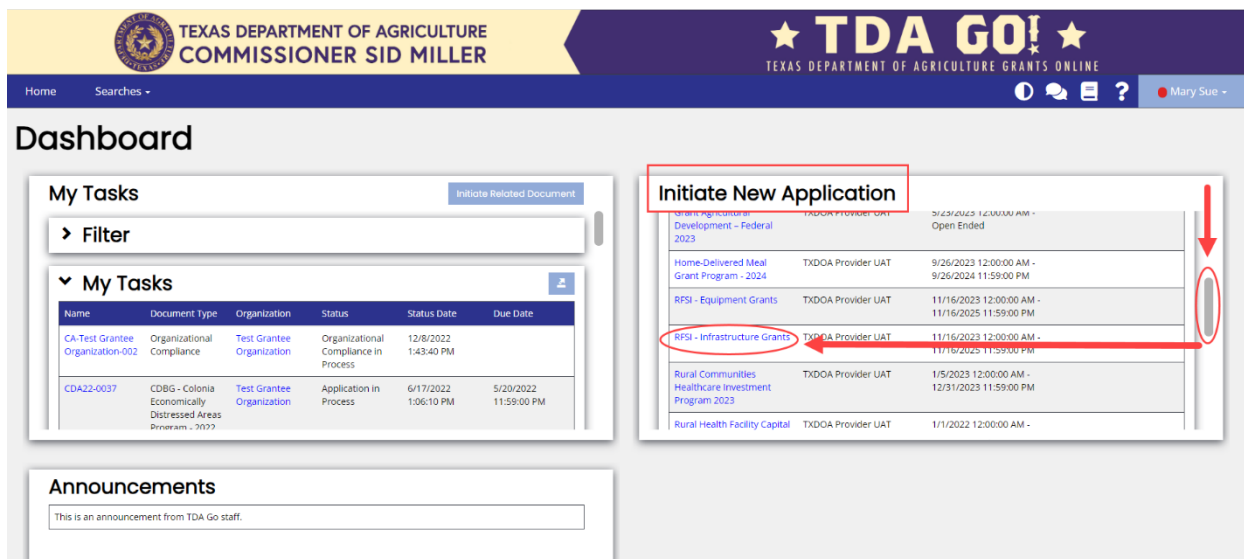
Figure 2. Initiate New Application Box and location of scrolling tool
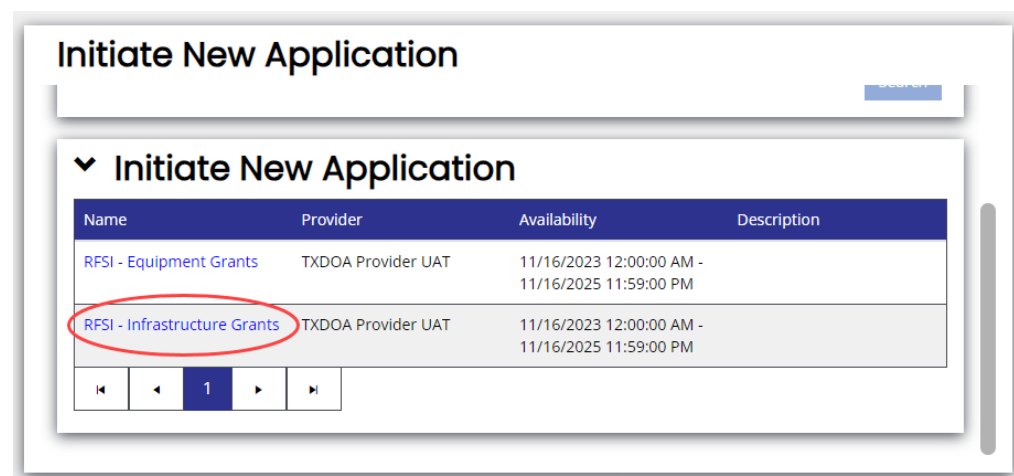
Figure 3. Selection for RFSI Infrasturcture Grant Application. Please note dates are for testing purposes only.

A brief description and agreement language appears (Figure 4). Read and select **Agree**.

Figure 4. Brief Description and Agreement Language

Document Landing Page

After Agree is selected, the Document Landing Page will appear (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Document Landing Page

The left column has your unique Grant Project Number at the top, then four drop down menus: **Forms, Status Options, Tools, and Related Documents.**

- **Forms** is a list of required information including Applicant Contact Information, Administrative Upload Forms, Work Plan, Budget Narrative, Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionaire, and Certification.
- **Status Options** is where the application can be submitted or cancelled.
- **Tools** include Add/Edit People who can access the application, Status History, Attachment Repository, Modification Summary, Document Validation, Notes, and Print Document ability.
- **Related Documents** is not applicable to the application submisson process. You will not need this function to submit your application.

Application Form Guidance

The following section provides additional guidance regarding selected sections of the application. As a reminder, this is a competitive grant application; TDA staff is available to answer questions regarding the program and to provide clarifying information concerning this RFGA.

TDA staff will not review any grant proposals prior to the application deadline.

Step 1: Start Application

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Application Contact Information** (Figure 6).

Figure 6. Application Contact Information location

All sections of the Application Form must be completed. See below for specific instructions.

NOTE: All required fields are marked with a *. An error message will appear and the application may not be submitted if these required fields are not filled out (Figure 7).

Figure 7. Example of Required Fields

NOTE: Any field with a Plus (+) button has the ability to add an additional row (Figure 8).

Figure 8. Add additional rows by clicking the plus (+) button

You can delete additional rows by pressing the red minus (-) button (Figure 9)

Figure 9. Subtract additional rows by clicking the minus (-) button

After completing the form, click the **Save** button in the top right hand corner (Figure 10). After clicking the **Save** button, if any required sections are missing, an error message will appear (Figure 11).

Figure 10. Regularly save your work by clicking the save button in the upper right hand corner

Figure 11. Error Message of missing required information

Step 2: Complete Administrative Form Uploads

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Administrative Form Uploads** (Figure 12).
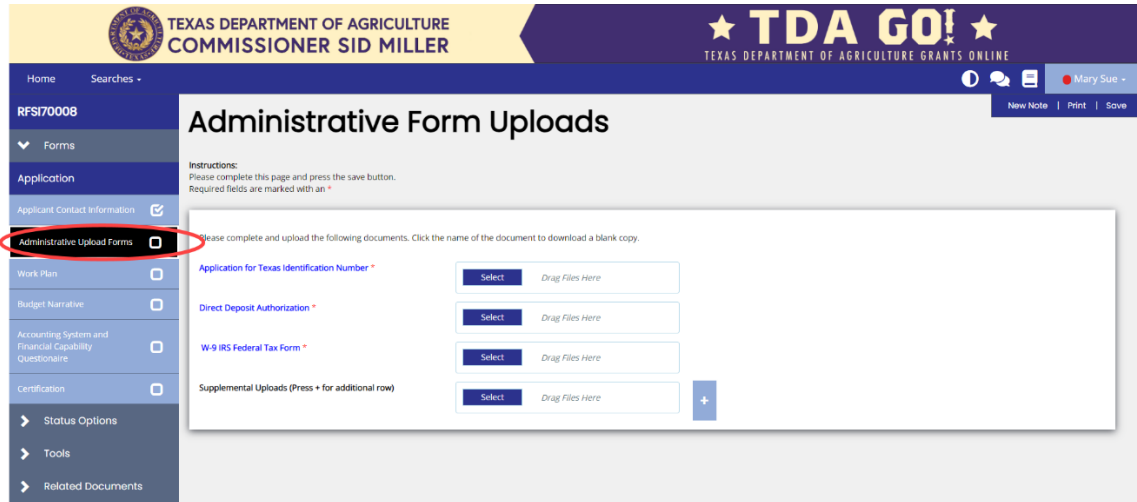
Figure 12. Administrative Upload Forms and Supplemental Uploads location

Upload all appropriate documents in Administrative Form Uploads. See below for specific instructions.

NOTE: If a question has a **Select** button in the answer box, you will need to upload the appropriate documentation if applicable (Figure 13). Click on the **Select** button to open the file selection screen.
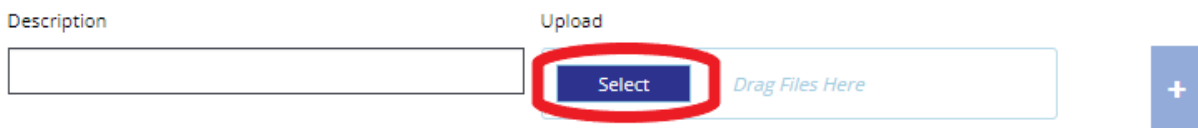
Figure 13. The Select button allows applicant to select and upload the appropriate documentation

Required Financial Forms:
You must download the following forms by clicking the name of the document in TDA-GO:
• Application for Texas Identification Number
• Direct Deposit Authorization
• W-9 IRS Federal Tax Form
YOU MUST USED THESE FORMS. NO OTHER FORMS WILL BE ACCEPTED.

Supporting Documentation: Applicants must upload all required and relevant additional documentation in the "Supplemental Uploads" field. Click the **Select** button to add a file. Additional documents may be added by clicking the **plus** (**+**) button (Figure 13).

You must download the following forms from the TDA RFSI website:
- Supplemental Uploads
  - Infrastructure Project Profile
  - Supplemental Project Questionnaire
  - Evidence of Critical Resources & Infrastructure Letter (If applicable)
  - Match Verification Letters

Other required documents for upload:
- Letters of Support/Commitment
- Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (NICRA) if applicable
- Equipment-Only Grants – Cost quote or market research to show fair estimate of equipment expense
- Additional supporting documentation (e.g. publications, supporting data, reference list, resumes, etc.) may be included as supplemental attachments.

After uploading all required forms, click the **Save** button in the top right hand corner (Figure 10). After clicking the **Save** button, if any required sections are missing, an error message will appear (Figure 11).

Step 3: Complete Work Plan

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Work Plan** (Figure 14).
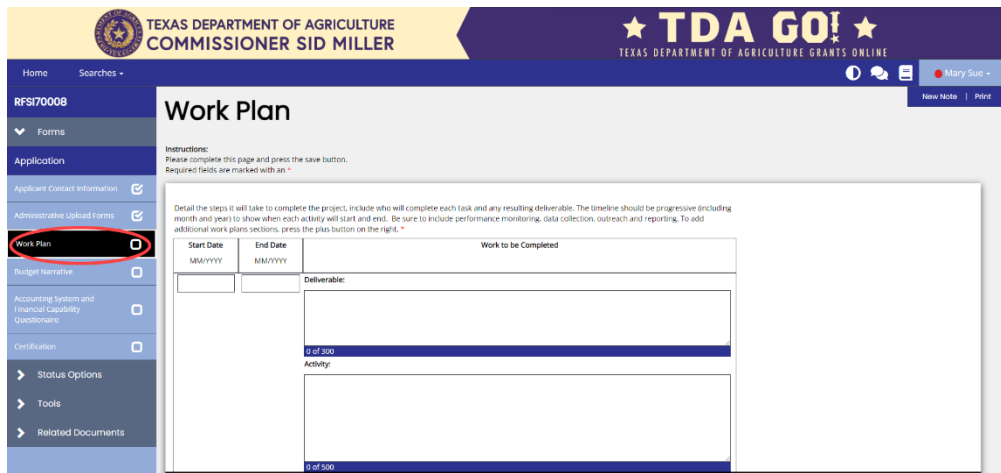
Figure 14. Work Plan location. Add additional rows by clicking the plus (+) button on the right hand side.

Instructions: Detail the steps it will take to complete the project, include who will complete each task and any resulting deliverable. The timeline should be progressive (including month and year) to show when each activity will start and end. Be sure to include performance monitoring, data collection, outreach and reporting.

After completing the Work Plan, click the **Save** button in the top right hand corner (Figure 10). After clicking the **Save** button, if any required sections are missing, an error message will appear (Figure 11).

Step 4: Complete Budget Narrative

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Budget Narrative** (Figure 15).

Figure 15. Budget Narrative location. Budget Summary will auto-populate the circle fields.

Instructions: Complete each budget category expense (Personnel, Fringe Benefits, Travel, Equipment, Supplies, Contractual/Consultant, and Other) as applicable to the project. The Budget Summary at the top will auto-populate as the individual categories are completed (Figure 15).

All expenses described in the Budget Narrative must be associated with expenses covered by the RFSI Program. Add additional rows by clicking the plus (+) button on the right hand side.

The following is specific instrction related to certain budget areas for the RFSI Program Infrastructure Grant.

NOTE: PERSONNEL - Please indicate the title and the role (PI, Co-Pi, etc.) for each personnel listed. Include all personnel with key roles in the project, even if no funding will be allocated to their participation. (Figure 16)

Figure 16. Personnel example fields

NOTE: TRAVEL – For each trip listed in the table describe the purpose of this trip and how it will achieve the objectives and outcomes of the project. Be sure to include approximately when the trip will occur and any other relevant information regarding expenses.

Use the first narrative box for information relevant to all travel. Use the individual trip narrative boxes for each trip listed in the table. All trips, including repeat trips, must be listed in both the table and the justification.

List details of each trip in the following format: Trip 1 (Approximate date Month/Year): Travel TO [Location]and FROM [Location] by NAME to [PURPOSE].

NOTE: EQUIPMENT - Please indicate the item description for each piece of equipment listed. Include desired acquisition date and funds requested. (Figure 17)

Figure 17. Equipment example fields

NOTE: CONTRACTUAL – Please indicate if a contractor/consultant will or will not be paid as a flat rate by checking the box to the left of the contractor's Name/Organization (Figure 18). If the contractor is not paid by flat rate, an additional contractual budget narrative will need to be completed.

Figure 18. Contractual/Consultant Flat Rate Check box

NOTE: CONSTRUCTION – The TDA Budget Narrative form does not have a separate category for constructions costs unlike the RFSI Infrastructure Project Profile. Please list all construction costs within "Contractual" in TDA-GO.

After completing the Budget Narrative, click the **Save** button in the top right hand corner (Figure 10). After clicking the **Save** button, if any required sections are missing, an error message will appear (Figure 11).

Step 5: Complete Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionaire** (Figure 19).

Figure 19. Accounting System and Financial Capability Questionnaire location

Step 6: Complete Review and Certification

Before completing Step 7 Certification, please review application for completeness and accuracy. Once the application is certified and submitted, an applicant *CANNOT* make any additional changes.

Review each section ensuring all information is correct and there are no error messages. If there are no errors, the section label in the drop down menu will have a check next to it (Figure 20).

Figure 20. Completed section with check mark

If there are error messages in a section, the section label in the drop down menu will have an exclamation point next to it (Figure 21). Return to the applicable section to review and resolve any error messages.
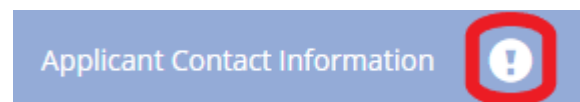
Figure 21. Incomplete section with error messages

Once all error messages are resolved and each section has a check mark as seen in Figure 20, the application may be certified and submitted.

Expand the **Forms** drop down menu and select **Certification** (Figure 22). This section requires an electronic signature from the Authorized Official, so the Authorized Official must be logged into their account.

NOTE: *Only the Authorized Official for your organization may Certify an application.*

To certify your application, the Authorized Official will check the box (Figure 22). The section is then complete. Click **Save** in the top right corner.

Figure 22. Certification and check box location

Proceed to step number 7 from this point in the application process.

Step 7: Application Submission

Once the application is certified (e-signed) and complete, you must submit the application within the TDA GO! system.

Expand the **Status Options** drop down menu (Figure 23). Select **Application Submitted.**
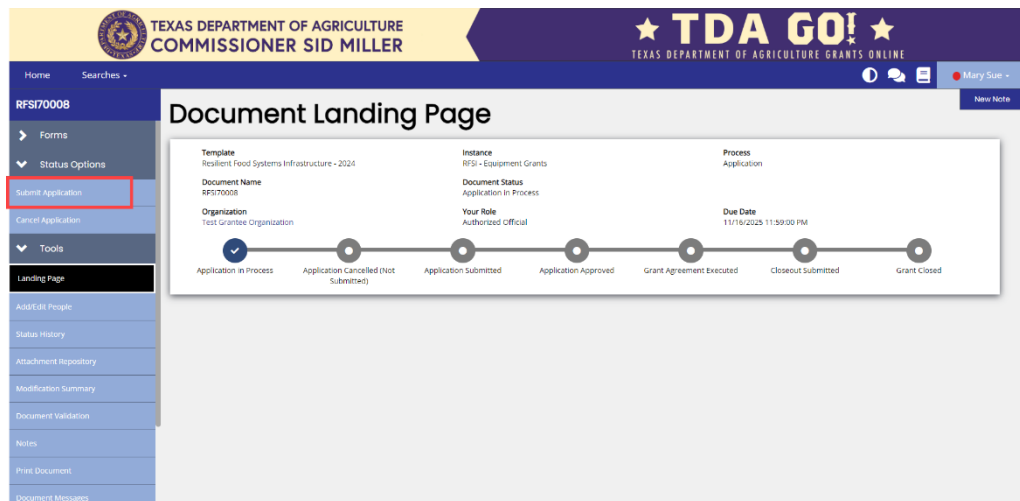
Figure 23. Status Options drop down menu and Application Submitted button location

NOTE: If errors remain, a **Document Validation** message will pop up noting what sections still have errors (Figure 24). You may click on each section name to be directed to the errors.

Figure 24. Document Validation message will appear if you try to submit application with errors

If no errors are detected, the system will ask if you are sure. Once you select submit, you will then be taken back to the **Landing Page** (Figure 25).
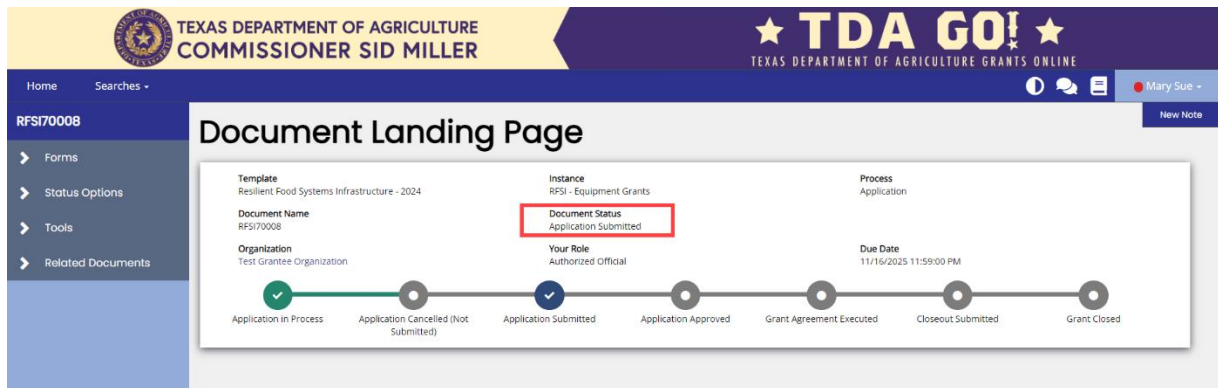
Figure 25. After application submission, you will return to the Document Landing Page.

NOTE: Applications must be submitted by the opportunity due date. The online application will no longer be available after that time. Times identified are based on TDA headquarters (Central Time Zone) and are displayed on your TDA GO home screen.

Confirmation Email

After submitting your application, you will receive a confirmation email (Figure 26).

From: websites@agatesoftware.com <websites@agatesoftware.com>
Sent: Tuesday, April 13, 2021 10:57 AM
Subject: Application HDM-2021-TGO-00005 Submitted

WARNING: This email originated from outside of the Texas Department of Agriculture email system. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you expect them from the sender and know the content is safe.

Thank you for submitting Application HDM-2021-TGO-00005 for Test Grantee Organization. TDA staff will review and contact the persons identified in the application with any questions or concerns

Figure 26. Example of confirmation email

TDA-GO New User Instructions

Step 1: Registering a New User in TDA-GO!

The following describes how to access the TDA-GO! online grant system by setting up a new user. The applicant must set up a new user account to access the Resilient Food Systems Infrastructure (RFSI) Grant application. **THIS MUST BE DONE 48-72 HOURS PRIOR TO SUBMITTING AN APPLICATION!**

Login

Username

Password

Submit

Login Assistance

New User/Organization Registration

Overall Steps to Getting Access:
- Complete New User Registration
- TDA will approve New User Registration
- New User will receive email of approval
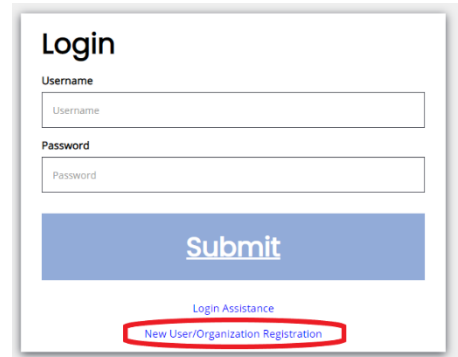- Once approved, New User can access and complete grant application

To register a New User, complete the following steps:

1) Go to the TDA-GO! website: https://tda-go.intelligrants.com/
2) Click on the **New User/Organization Registration** link found in the Login box on the right side of the webpage.
3) Fill in the required fields and any optional fields desired. See Legend below for specific field instructions. Click on the **Register** button.

New User Registration

Page instructions for the registration modal

First Name | Middle Name

Last Name | Prefix | Suffix

Title

SAM Number (UEI Number) [Search] | FEIN

Organization

Address | Address 2

City | State

Zip Code | County

Email | Phone

Phone 2 | Fax

Cell Phone | Website

Username

Password | Verify Password

Notes
RFSI Grant Applicant

[Register]

Legend
First Name (Required)
Last Name (Required)
SAM (UEI) Number/ FEIN (Required) – enter the FEIN (Federal Employer Identification Number) and UEI (Unique Identity Number, also knows as the SAM number for the organization. *See instructions below for Consultant/Researcher role.*
Organization (Required) – Enter FIRST AND LAST NAME (applicant).
Title –(Required)
Street Address (Required)
State (Required)
County (Required)
City (Required)
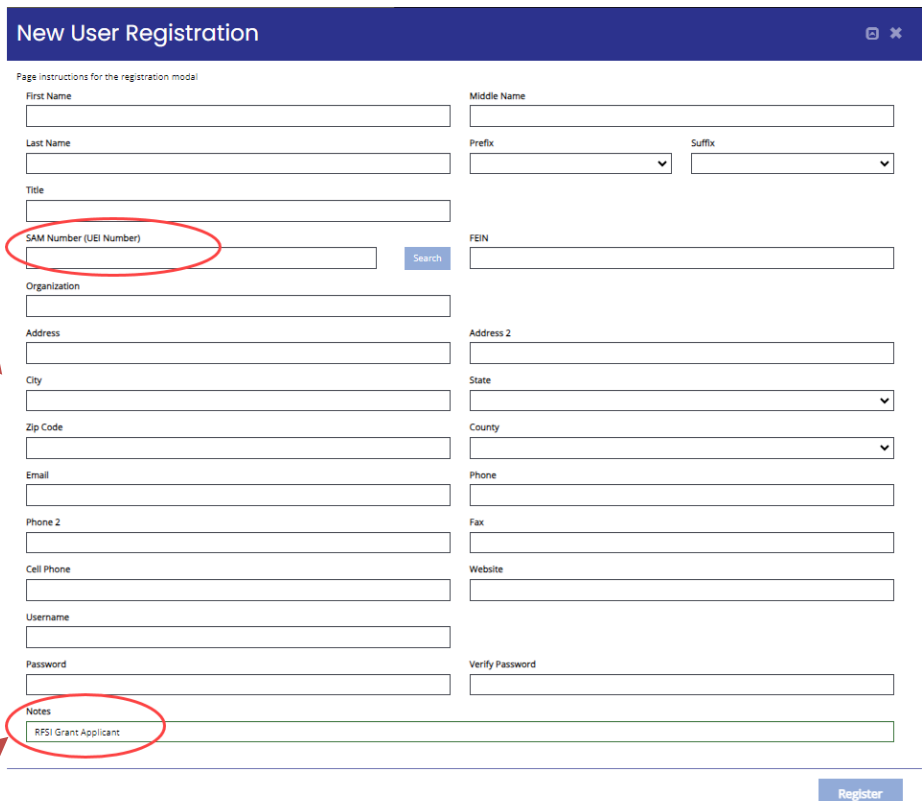**Zip Code (Required)**
Email (Required)
Phone (Required)
Username (Required) –Use your email address.
Password/Verify Password (Required) – the password the registering user (applicant) wishes to register for.
**Notes**: Enter "***RFSI Grant Applicant***".

4) **Hit Register.** The registration for the New User will be sent to TDA staff for approval. You will receive an email indicating approval within 48-72 hours. After approval, the New User can log on and access the TDA-GO! platform.

> **NOTE: If a user attempts to access the system before they have been approved, the system will show their password as invalid.**

You will receive an email confirming registration approval. Once for the organization and another for the user.
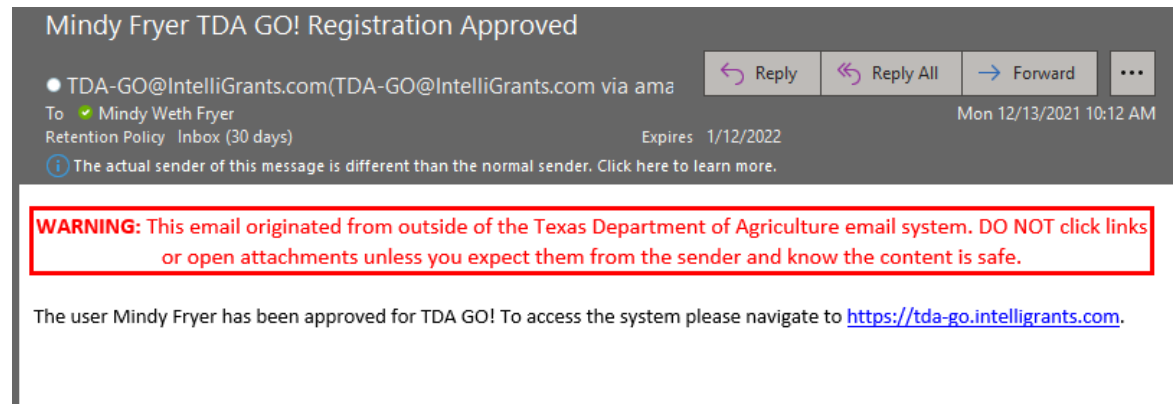
TDA-GO User Roles:

Authorized Official (AO) for Applicant Organizations

Who:	Person authorized to enter into legal agreements on behalf of the organization
Created By:	Initially, the AO is created when the Organization account is established. Additional AO's may be added once Organization account is approved.
TDA-GO tasks:	

- Create new user accounts for organization members
- Initiate an application
- Complete all required application fields
- Certify and Submit an application
- Execute Grant Agreements
- Initiate/Complete/Submit Payment request/Performance reports

Project Director (PD) for Applicant Organizations

Who:	Personnel involved in grant administration
Created By:	The organization's AO creates and manages PD users
TDA-GO tasks:	

- Create new user accounts for organization members
- Initiate an application
- Submit an application

- Complete all required application fields
- Initiate/Complete/Submit Payment request/Performance reports

Consultant/Researcher (C/R)

Who:	A third-party person assisting with a *single* grant application or employee/researcher/staff/PIs/professors assisting with a *single* grant application.
Created By:	The C/R registers individually as a New User. The AO *DOES NOT* create C/R users.
TDA-GO! tasks:	• Complete all required application fields • Initiate/Complete Payment request/Performance reports

Adding Consultants/Researchers

General Overview for Consultant/Researcher Role

The TDA-GO! System allows organization Staff/Researchers/PIs/Professors or third-party consultants to work directly on a particular application using the Consultant/Researcher (C/R) role. This role allows the organization to maintain privacy and confidentiality of all grant applications and projects in TDA-GO!. The following high-level chart outlines the steps needed for the C/R to gain access to the application. See the following pages for step-by-step instructions.

Note: The Project Director role does not work for project Staff/Researchers/PIs/Professors because this role allows access all information under the Organization.

See the next page for a flow chart.

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3
Navigate to tda-go.intelligrants.com/	Click "New User/Orginzation Registration"	Fill in Requried Feilds for C/R new user

	Organization Name	
DUNS enter all zeros (e.g. 000000000	Put C/R New User First and Last name, *DO NOT* enter the Organization name	Enter Organization address and work email

STEP 7	STEP 8	STEP 9
Contact the Organization Authorized Official or Project Director to initiate a new application on your behalf.	AO or PD must request access of C/R to the appropriate application by emailing grants@Texasagriculture.gov	TDA will approve the C/R New User. C/R can log in and access assigned application.

To register a Consultant/Research New User, complete the following steps:
1) Navigate to TDA-GO! Portal website: **tda-go.intelligrants.com**
2) Click on the *New User/Organization Registration* link.

Login

Username

[Username]

Password

[Password]

Submit

Login Assistance

New User/Organization Registration

3) Fill in the required fields and any optional fields desired. See **Legend** below for specific field instructions. Click the *Save* button.

Legend

First Name (Required) – the first name of Consultant/Research (C/R) New User.

Middle Name – the middle name of C/R.

Last Name (Required) – the last name of C/R.

UEI/SAM & DUNS (Required) –Enter all zeros if you are a C/R at a University/College (e.g. 000000000).

Organization (Required) – Enter the name of the C/R New User. *Do not enter the name of the organization.*

Title – the position title of the C/R.

Street Address (Required) – the street address of the organization.

State (Required) – select the state of the organization using the state drop-down menu.

County (Required) – select the county where the organization is located using the county drop-down menu.

City (Required) – the name of the city of the organization.

Zip Code (Required) – the zip code of the organization.

Email (Required) – the email address of the C/R.

Phone (Required) – the phone number of the C/R.

Username (Required) – create a username for the C/R.

Password/Verify Password (Required) – create a password for the C/R.
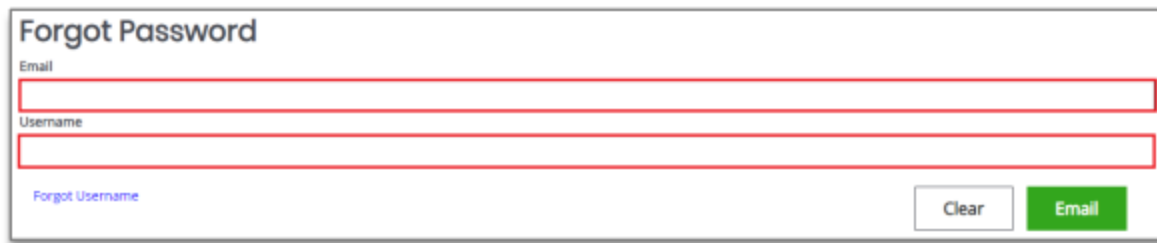
Notes: Enter "*RFSI Grant Applicant*".

4) Once saved, contact the A/O or P/D to initiate the new application the C/R will be accessing.

5) The A/O or P/D must request access for the C/R by emailing Grants@TexasAgriculture.gov.

6) Once the request is received, the C/R New User will be approved by TDA-GO! Portal staff. Please allow 1 – 2 business days for approval. After approval, the C/R can log on and access the TDA-GO platform.

NOTE: If a user attempts to access the system before they have been approved, the system will show their password as invalid

Login Assistance

The TDA-GO! portal allows the user to request a password reset be generated and sent to their email address. To do so, complete the following steps:

1) Click on the Login Assistance link.

2) Enter the username and email address. Click on the Email button. A reset link will be sent to the email address supplied.

Forgot Password

Email

Username

Forgot Username   Clear   Email

3) An email like the following will be sent to reset your password:

From: TDA-GO@IntelliGrants.com <TDA-GO@IntelliGrants.com>
Sent: Monday, June 26, 2023 1:01 PM
To: Mindy Weth Fryer <Mindy.Fryer@TexasAgriculture.gov>
Subject: Password Reset

WARNING: This email originated from outside of the Texas Department of Agriculture email system. DO NOT click links or open attachments unless you expect them from the sender and know the content is safe.

You have requested a password reset. Please use the link below reset your password. It will expire in 15 minutes.
Reset Password

If you did not request this reset and would like to invalidate and cancel the request, please click here.

4) At that point, the user will be brought directly to the Profile page and requested to create a new password into the Password and Confirm Password fields are available.

NOTE: The password field is case sensitive and will not recognize characters of the wrong case. Precision when entering the password into the password field will decrease the risk of error messages being generated by the system.